

MEADOWS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
POLICY INSTITUTE

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**House Committee on County Affairs:  
The Texas Mental Health Landscape & COVID-19**

Andy Keller, PhD | March 11, 2021

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# Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

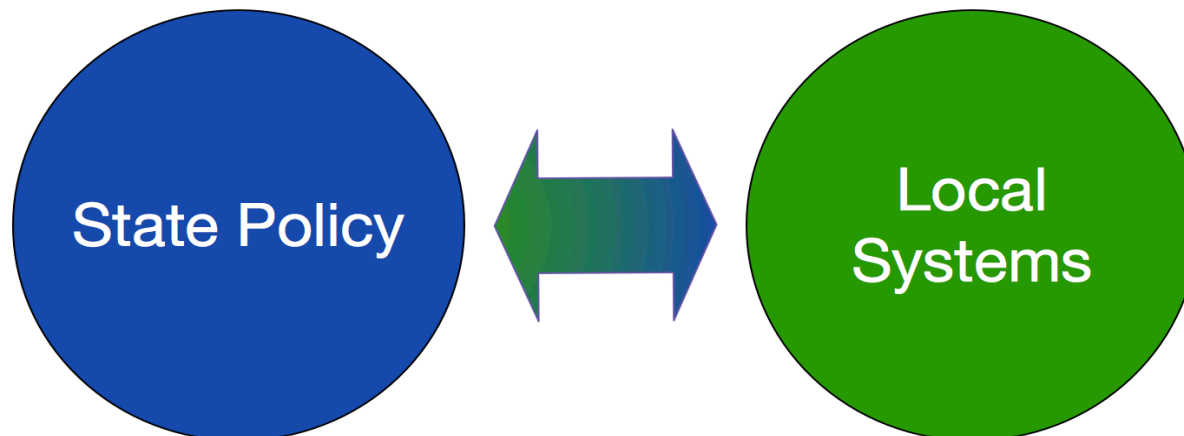
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## Vision

We envision Texas to be the national leader in treating all people with mental health needs.

## Mission Statement

To provide independent, non-partisan, data-driven, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates equitable systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective and efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it.



# We Treat the Brain Differently Than the Body

**7,632**  
**SUBSTANCE**  
RELATED DEATHS  
in Texas in 2018

## THE CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

**3,930**  
DEATHS BY  
**SUICIDE**  
in Texas in 2018

The Goal of Health Care: **LIVING YOUR LIFE** in the COMMUNITY

PHYSICAL



WORK



SCHOOL



HOME

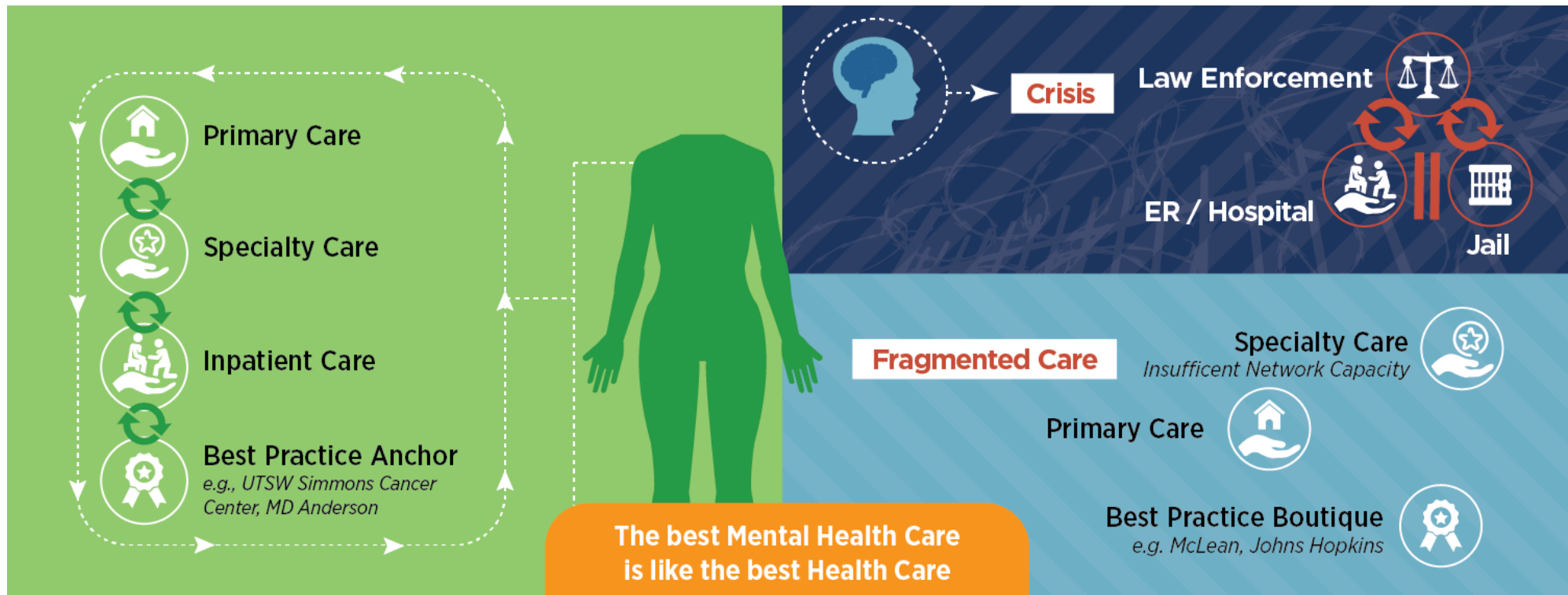


FAITH



FAMILY

MENTAL



# Unmet Mental Health Needs: Local Burden

**30,000**

Texas children are at risk for entry into the “school to prison pipeline”



**300,000**

Texans in need receive no treatment at all

## THE COST of UNMET MENTAL HEALTH NEED

**\$2.2 billion**

total cost to local Texas governments

**\$1.4 billion**

in emergency room costs

**\$700 million**

in local justice system costs

**— \$100 million** other



## “SUPER UTILIZATION”



do not receive care adequate to break the cycle of “super utilization”



**6 in 7**

who need ACT do not receive it

**9 in 10**

who need FACT do not receive it



**Jail Costs for Individuals with Mental Illness**

**\$461 million**

**Juvenile Justice Costs for Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbances**

**\$236 million**

**Psychiatric Emergency Department Costs**

**\$965 million**

**Alcohol and Substance Abuse Emergency Department Costs**

**\$457 million**

**Other Costs (e.g. shelter services to homeless individuals and school district costs)**

**\$100 million**

**Total Costs to Local Governments**

**\$2.2 billion**

# COVID-19 and Mental Health: Impacts

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*COVID-19 has dramatically increased mental health needs.*

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now tracks mental health needs weekly. As of late-February 2021:
  - Symptoms of anxiety disorder up 4-fold (33.4% vs 8.2%)
  - Symptoms of depression up 4-fold (27.7% vs 6.6%)
- The number of people seriously considering suicide doubled.
- Mid-March through October 2020, the proportion of mental health-related ED visits increased 24% among children aged 5–11 and 31% among adolescents aged 12–17.
- A November 2020 *Lancet* study found mental illness increases the risk of COVID 65% and COVID causes more mental illness.

# COVID-19 and Mental Health: Projections

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*In April 2020, we began a series of reports projecting the mental health impacts of the pandemic.*

- Our original projections suggested that for every 5% increase in the unemployment rate compared to pre-pandemic levels, an additional **4,000 Americans**, including **300 Texans**, could be lost to suicide.
- COVID-induced job loss has disproportionately affected people of color, including Blacks and Latinos.
- Multiple national groups and media sources have used our estimates.

# Racial and Ethnic Disparities

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*Where people live, work, learn, and play affect a wide range of risks and health outcomes. These conditions are known as social determinants of health. Health inequities also drive disparities.*

A 2020 analysis of 50 million patient health records found:

- Black, Latino, and Asian patients had significantly higher rates of COVID infection than White patients.
- Black, Latino, and Asian patients had significantly higher rates of hospitalization and death due to COVID.

*Adults with low incomes are also more likely to have higher rates of chronic conditions, which increase the risk of serious illness if infected with COVID.*





# RECOMMENDATIONS



# Secure Access Gains Through Telehealth

*COVID-19 has modernized the treatment dynamic.*

- Since March 2020, HHSC has authorized certain behavioral health services to be reimbursed in Medicaid when delivered by **telemedicine, telehealth, or telephone.**

*The Texas Legislature should adopt a budget rider to maintain this access for the biennium, at a minimum.*

*HB 4 (Price) would ensure permanent access.*

## Claims for Telephone (Audio Only) Behavioral Health Services

Last updated on 3/20/2020

**Note:** Texas Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) must provide all medically necessary, Medicaid-covered services to eligible clients. Administrative procedures such as prior authorization, pre-certification, referrals, and claims/encounter data filing may differ from traditional Medicaid (fee-for-service) and from MCO to MCO. Providers should contact the client's specific MCO for details.

To help ensure continuity of care during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) response, HHSC is authorizing providers to submit claims for dates of service March 20, 2020, through April 30, 2020, for reimbursement of the following behavioral health services delivered by telephone (audio only):

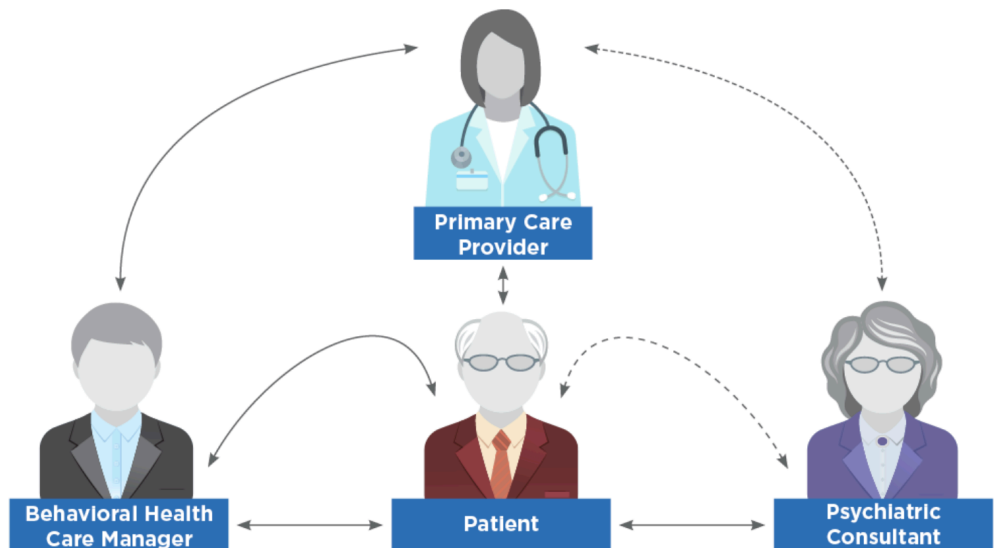
Description of Services	Procedure Codes
Psychiatric Diagnostic Evaluation	90791, 90792
Psychotherapy	90832, 90834, 90837, 90846, 90847, 90853
Peer Specialist Services	H0038
Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)	99408, G2011, H0049
Substance Use Disorder Services	H0001, H0004, H0005
Mental Health Rehabilitation	H0034, H2011, H2012, H2014, H2017

To indicate the occurrence of remote delivery, providers should continue to use the 95 modifier.

# Implement Collaborative Care in Medicaid

*Collaborative Care (CoCM) is a proven, team-based approach to detect and treat mental illness in primary care.*

- Coverage: Medicare since 2017, commercial since 2019
- Cost saver: Up to 6 to 1 in total medical costs in Medicare and Medicaid settings; \$15 billion in Medicaid savings if as few as 20 percent of beneficiaries with depression receive it.
- Universal access to CoCM to treat major depression could *reduce suicide deaths by 725 to 1,100 per year in Texas.*
- CoCM works especially well in *Black and Latino communities.*
- Filed as HB 2834 (Bonnen)/672 (Buckingham)



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*The truth is: mental illness affects more people than you may think, and we need to talk about it. It's Okay to say..."* [okaytosay.org](http://okaytosay.org)

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